

**REMARKS**

Reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11, 13-20, 22-27 and 30-35 previously presented for examination remain in the application. Claims 28-29 have been withdrawn from examination as a result of an earlier restriction requirement, but may be pursued in a separate application to be filed at a later date. Claims 1, 9, 11, 13, 19, 20, 23, 27, 30, 34 and 35 have been amended and claims 12, 21 and 36 have been canceled without prejudice. No claims have been added.

Claims 10, 12, 21, 27 and 36 would be allowable if rewritten to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. (It is assumed based on the stated reasons for allowance that claim 36 was intended to be included in this list as provided above instead of claim 26 as set forth in the Office Action.) It is also stated that claims 10, 12, 21 27 and 36 need to be rewritten to overcome rejection(s) under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph set forth in the Office Action. No such rejection(s) are specified, however.

The drawings have been deemed to be acceptable subject to correction of the informalities noted by the Draftsperson. Applicants are submitting formal drawings concurrently herewith to address the informalities noted by the Draftsperson.

Claims 1-9, 11, 13-20, 22-26 and 30-35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being considered to be anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,237,129 to Patterson et al. ("Patterson").

As admitted in the Office Action, the prior art of record, including Patterson, does not teach or suggest automatically placing a plurality of layout objects according to relative placement constraint information such that object-specific constraints are given priority over a conflicting global option.

Independent claims 1, 13, 23 and 30 as amended each include such a limitation. Thus, for at least this reason, claims 1, 13, 23 and 30 are patentably distinguished over Patterson.

Claims 2-11, claims 14-20 and 22, claims 24-27 and claims 31-35 depend from and further limit claims 1, 13, 23 and 30, respectively and thus, should also be found to be patentably distinguished over Patterson for at least the same reasons.

Applicants also respectfully submit that Patterson does not teach or suggest hard and soft groups as set forth in claim 7, or an approach for extracting user constraint information as set forth in claim 15. It is also noted that Patterson applies to programmable gate arrays while some embodiments of the present invention apply to integrated circuit devices other than programmable gate arrays.

Based on the foregoing, applicants respectfully submit that the applicable rejections and objections have been overcome and that claims 1-11, 13-20, 22-27 and 30-35 are in condition for allowance. If the examiner disagrees or believes that further discussion will expedite prosecution of this case, the examiner is invited to telephone applicants' representative at the number indicated below.

If there are any charges, please charge Deposit Account No. 02-2666.

Respectfully submitted,

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